NPYM ASPC Additional Comment arising from the 2012 ASPC Report to NPYM*

The 2012 Annual Session Planning Committee has finished its work and submitted a report written by the General Arrangements co clerks to NPYM. Outside of the limited evaluation framework of how well the ASPC accomplished its work, there were additional questions and comments coming out of the final evaluation meetings on the purpose and structure of the Annual Session and relationship to the NPYM as a whole. In recognition of the ongoing work of the Ad Hoc Committee to Oversee Evaluation of NPYM Structure, this separate note reports on these additional concerns recognizing that they may fall outside of the charge to report to the NPYM as a whole.

1. Question What is the purpose of Annual Session. Is it held for the benefit of Attenders at the Annual Session or for the benefit of the entire Yearly Meeting?

Background: When the Yearly Meeting decided to bring all its business to the Annual Session, having seasoned concerns, organizational changes, affiliations, faith and practice changes etc through our Monthly Meetings, we were making a determination about the purpose of Annual Session. And we decided that the Annual Session is where we have decided to do our business, our discernment of NPYM policy.

At the same time, the AS is for more than doing our business together. It is also an annual gathering for fellowship (a "homecoming" or "family reunion"), and a time of Spiritual retreat from the day-to-day world. Each of these parts contribute to the Spiritual growth of the attenders individually and to group as a whole, Attenders take back to their meetings and contribute to the Spiritual health of the meetings they return home to.

Implication Many Friends appear to be unclear about the importance of the Annual Session in the NPYM. This relationship needs to be explicitly discussed and considered by all the meetings and worship groups in NPYM.

Some clear financial decisions i.e., costs for food and lodging could be assumed by those that can attend the AS. But if the Annual Session is for the benefit of the whole, then the Annual Session PROGRAM FEES could be assumed in the NPYM budget as a whole. This would mean a lower cost to attenders and to families whose children were also charged program fees. Likely the costs would be reflected in an increase in member assessments.

One well informed Friend estimated the portion of the NPYM assessment to cover the cost of putting on the AS, i.e. covering the Program Fees cost (not the room and board at the Annual Session) would be about $25 or more per adult member of our total all ages 1000 person NPYM members. That would have to either be added to the current assessment or we would have to cut NPYM's other expenses by this amount.

Outcome sought for: The hoped for outcome would be greater attendance at the Annual Session and particularly for families and a greater ownership of discernment of business matters by the NPYM as a whole.

2. Question Can we worshipfully consider the business of the Yearly Meeting on an ongoing basis to include all members of NPYM and not just the attenders at the Annual Session.

Background

We know that few Monthly Meetings actually seasoned everything that came their way from NPYM ad hoc
and standing committees. For some Meetings, the reality was that there were no or poorly attended opportunities to do so. New Zealand Friends manage to do this in their white and gold papers system of seasoning yearly meeting business thoroughly at the Monthly Meeting level.

**Implication**

We could reserve our time together at the Annual Session for issues and questions around which there seems to be no unity as evidenced when the Presiding Clerk gathers responses from Monthly Meetings? Accordingly for clear unity perceived as a result of seasoning, could these issues be quickly recorded or reviewed at AS?

For example: What about publishing financial reports and nominations before Annual Session and not addressing them in plenary sessions?

For Example Are there ways we can reduce the worship devoted to considering business from eight plenary sessions to four or five, leaving more time for fellowship, worship and play or of course for more immediate "growing edge" issues facing NPYM Friends?

Outcome sought for a greater potential engagement of all NPYM Friends and Attenders in discernment or Friends growing edge of turning faith into action

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* This note is based on discussions by the ASPC in the course of evaluating our 2012 AS in Tacoma and generally alluded to in the ASPC Report submitted by General Arrangements Clerks Chris and Kat Willard. I take responsibility for the editing of several members well written notes specifically by Margaret Coahran and Jane Ewert and reformulating them in this manner

John Allcott

Presiding Clerk, 2012 Annual Session

November 8, 2012